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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 1941

SUBJECT: "CAULIFLOWER AND CABBAGE." Information from home economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Today I have some notes about two prominent members of one of our first vegetable families. The family name is Brassica. And the two prominent members are cabbage and cauliflower.

My information has come to me from the U. S. Department of Agriculture. And the cooking suggestions have been furnished by the home economists of that department.

But let me quote you first the part about the family resemblance of cabbage and cauliflower. They say:

Botanically cauliflower and cabbage are the closest of kin. Over 4,000 years ago our ancestors were using their ancestor--wild cabbage. But besides being on the same family tree, these vegetables have other things in common. They have similar food values. They look somewhat alike. And the recommended methods for cooking are about the same for both cabbage and cauliflower.

First for food value.

As far as vitamin C is concerned, these vegetables are sisters under the skin. For in the raw state, both cabbage and cauliflower are excellent sources of vitamin C. As you know, this is one vitamin we need every day--because we can't store it in our bodies. As for vitamin B-one, both cabbage and cauliflower are fair sources.

In addition, cabbage-green cabbage--is a good source or even better of vitamin A, iron, and calcium. For these, the outside green leaves of the cabbages that some people throw away are the most valuable.

I imagine you can remember not so long ago when we used to call cauliflower "rich man's cabbage." Cauliflower was so expensive in those days that it was out of reach of all but the most generous food budgets. Of course, the reason for this expensiveness could be traced to the way cauliflower has to be handled. That is, it is really more trouble to grow than a lot of other vegetables, cabbage, for example.

Cauliflower has to have a lot of attention while it is growing. And it has to have just the right kind of weather, neither too hot nor too cold, nor too much rain, nor too little--week after week. Also just as the cauliflower heads start to form, the growers usually have to tie leaves over those heads by hand. That way the leaves keep the white heads from being discolored by the sun.

Cauliflower is a lot less expensive now, of course, for modern means of production and transportation have taken some of the costliness out of distribution. But still, it is more expensive than easier-to-grow cabbage. Right now, cauliflower is on most markets in goodly quantities.

A head of cauliflower really is a group of small flower clusters and flower stems. When you go to buy cauliflower look for a head with flower clusters compact, firm, and white or creamy white in color when you buy it. Look for outside leaves that are fresh and green. Signs of poor cauliflower are spreading of the little flowers apart from each other. Good cauliflower may be either small or large. And leaves that grow up through the curd are no sign of poor quality, though they don't help the cauliflower's appearance.

As for cooking cauliflower--that's not hard at all. But the way you do the cooking can make or break the cauliflower. Here's how, according to cooking expert

Take off all the outside green leaves, except the last very tender ones. You can cook the cauliflower in one large head, or break it into small flowerlets first. It cooks more quickly in smaller pieces. But either way, one medium-sized head will make 5 to 6 good servings.

Wash the cauliflower carefully first in cold water. Then drop it into enough lightly salted boiling water to cover it. Leave the lid off to cut down the odor in cooking. If you have to use hard water for cooking, cauliflower is bound to turn a creamy yellow.

Allow 20 to 30 minutes for a whole head of cauliflower to cook tender, but only 10 to 15 minutes when broken up into the flowerlets. How well done you want cauliflower depends on your own taste preference. Cut the cooking time down as much as possible to prevent darkening of the cauliflower and unnecessary loss of food value.

As soon as the cauliflower is tender enough for your liking, drain it and lift it out of the pan carefully. Then use it in any number of dishes. Serve it with melted butter and a sprinkling of paprika. Or put browned, buttered crumbs on top. Or sprinkle it with grated cheese and buttered crumbs, put in the oven and leave it there until the cheese has melted and the crumbs have browned.

Now just a word about cooking cabbage. Important points to remember are to leave a lid off the pan, and not overcook. As with cauliflower, leaving the lid off the pan keeps the vegetable from having too strong an odor and makes for better flavor. Also, it helps keep the pale green color of the outer leaves intact. Cooked this way, shredded cabbage takes only 5 to 10 minutes.

Of course, if you want to get the very most vitamin C out of either cabbage or cauliflower, you won't serve it cooked at all. There are lots of ways to serve cabbage raw--shredded in salads, and in combination with vegetables, and fruits, and nuts, and raisins. And you can eat cauliflower raw, also--though not in so many ways.

Just as a final note--here's a suggestion from the home economists about using cauliflower to pep up your relish dish. Just serve little white cauliflower-lets along with strips of carrots, slivers of green pepper, little red radishes, and slices of cucumber. Or try it with any combination of your favorite vegetable sacks.

And that's all my news about cauliflower.

